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LOS ANGELES COUNTY OFFICE OF CHILD PROTECTION

Research and Analysis Report Prepared by Advancement Project for the
County of Los Angeles Office of Child Protection:
Informing the OCP's Prevention Initiatives



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Executive Summary

In late 2015, the Los Angeles County Office of Child Protection (OCP) convened the Prevention Workgroup to support the development of a comprehensive child maltreatment prevention strategy. The establishment of the Workgroup was in response to the Los Angeles County Blue Ribbon Commission on Child Protection's recommendations to design such a prevention plan in partnership with the Department of Public Health and First 5 LA.

The initial discussions of the Workgroup quickly focused on the fact that prevention-oriented supports were not equally needed throughout the county. In fact, there were several communities that chronically ranked highest in the number of children referred to DCFS or cases of maltreatment crimes reported by law enforcement. At the same time, it was clear that these community "hotspots" differed from one another in regard to demographics, community infrastructure needs, and whether a community is urban or rural. Therefore, each hotspot would require a customized approach to truly move the needle around child maltreatment and negligence.

From these discussions and with the support of Casey Family Programs, this research report was commissioned to better understand the "geography of prevention" in Los Angeles County. By using data indicators beyond referral or substantiated rates to delineate the various types of high need communities in L.A. County, this research was designed to provide the OCP with an operating framework from which to form and direct prevention efforts in the future. The Advancement Project, in close partnership with Dr. Jacquelyn McCroskey, launched this effort by conducting a literature review of the different domains or frameworks to understand prevention and to identify potential data indicators to assess the varying levels of prevention needs in the county.

The literature review revealed a number of social and structural conditions that act as additional stressors for families and communities. The identification of these factors that were strongly associated with higher risks for maltreatment provided a basis of analyzing both risk and protective factors. This led to the identification of 21 potential primary and secondary data indicators within the domains of Strengthening Families, Community Conditions, and Community Belonging and Participation.

Advancement Project staff then worked with several partners to vet and gather data sets that were available at geographic units small enough to conduct a comparative analysis of ZIP Codes throughout the county. In the end, eight of the 21 potential data indicators were available for analysis at the ZIP Code level. While this report represents one of the most comprehensive compilations of prevention-oriented data for this type of analysis in L.A. County, the researchers had hoped to utilize a more robust set of data indicators.,.

After analyzing the data, 25 ZIP Codes rose to the top of this list. These ZIP Codes clustered into a few larger hotspot areas including Wilmington/North Long Beach area, South Los Angeles, San Fernando/Pacoima, and the Antelope Valley. There are also highly ranked ZIP Codes in the central/metro area of L.A. City and Boyle Heights/East L.A. Area.

Looking more closely at the data, three distinct types of prevention hotspots began to emerge. The first type of hotspot, which was generally the highest ranked overall, is where there is a severe absence of prevention and family support services which coincide with severe levels of reported maltreatment. This included communities such as South L.A., Athens, Watts, and Panorama City. A second kind of hotspot was where there are more prevention and family support services available but still very high reports of maltreatment. This includes the northernmost ZIP Codes in South L.A. as well as Boyle Heights, Hi Vista, and North Hills. The third type of hotspot identified also had relatively high levels of reported maltreatment (though not at the highest levels) coupled with a very high level of “prevention need” for family support services. Communities such as Palmdale, Van Nuys, Westlake, and parts of Long Beach are included in this category.

Depending on the type, a hotspot may require an infusion of new support services for families where previously there were few supports. For other hotspots, it may be a matter of increased community education to increase access to existing services. There may also be a need to improve the coordination amongst existing services and increased accountability of county leadership on the quality of the services offered. There may also be hotspots where both types of efforts are required. In the end, this research effort was designed to provide the Workgroup with a better grasp of the different types of prevention hotspots that exist so that it could design more relevant interventions and supports rather than relying on a “one-size-fits-all” strategy.

While we are pleased to present these findings to the Workgroup, it is imperative to understand the limitations of the research analysis. To be clear, a quantitative analysis of administrative data can only tell half the story. Because of the limited availability of data, we recommend that the Workgroup conduct additional research to validate the different types of prevention hotspots outlined herein.

An effective research strategy moving forward would be to directly engage community residents, community organizations, and other stakeholders in some of the identified hotspots to further dissect and analyze the data presented in this report. . While this report goes a long way in identifying priority communities, given the diverse socioeconomic communities found in these hotspots (many of which have very high concentrations of African American and Latino families), there may be other cultural/community-level dynamics that this quantitative analysis cannot identify, but community stakeholders are best suited to articulate.

Finally, given the short turnaround time for this research, we were unable to explore the assets and community resources that currently exist within these hotspots. Therefore, we do recommend that additional analysis of community assets (and their capacity) be considered before finalizing the prevention plan.

Methodology

Our approach is grounded in a literature review of child abuse and neglect that identifies indicators used to determine ZIP Codes with the highest need for prevention and the highest rates of maltreatment (Table 1). These indicators are based on key resources, programs, referrals, and survey data available within L.A. County. They also mix counts of individuals with percentages or rates, to reduce bias for or against urban or rural L.A. communities. Discussions with members of the OCP Steering Committee further validated indicators, and committee members were instrumental in collecting data for this analysis. It should be noted, however, that a lack of indicators available at the most local levels reduced the number of indicators we could analyze.

Our method of analysis is straightforward. We rank order measures of maltreatment and prevention by ZIP Code and average these rankings to create overall maltreatment and prevention ranks. The higher the rank, the higher the number of children referred to DCFS or percentage of persons who moved in the past year, for example. The rankings identify priority ZIP Codes where we should begin prevention efforts and learn what approaches work in different communities before broadening interventions countywide.

Of the nearly three hundred ZIP Codes in L.A. County, this analysis was initially tasked to identify the top three to five with the highest maltreatment and prevention need. We present the top 25 highest maltreatment and prevention need ZIP Codes here in the table and map that follow. Top ZIP Codes are listed based on whether their highest rankings are driven by a top 10 maltreatment ranking, a top 10 prevention need ranking, or both. Future endeavors can improve upon research here by weighting indicators in an index or analysis to understand patterns across the broader (three hundred) county ZIP Codes.

Table 1. ZIP Code Maltreatment and Prevention Need Indicators

Maltreatment	Number of children referred to DCFS
	Child maltreatment crimes reported by LAPD and LASD
	Children with maltreatment allegations per 1,000 children (California Children's Services Archive)
Prevention	Percent of persons who moved in the past year (U.S. Census Bureau's American Community Survey)
	Percent of renter households spending 35%+ of income on rent (U.S. Census Bureau's American Community Survey)
	Percent of children 0-5 without access to a licensed childcare seat (California Department of Social Services' Community Care Licensing Division, and L.A. Office of Child Care)
	Children referred to DCFS where the structured decision-making assessment involved substance abuse or domestic violence
	Cases on CalWORKs, General Relief, Refugee, CAPI, Medical Assistance only, CalFresh, and IHSS program caseloads (DPSS)

Note: Data for indicators were ranked and standardized for analysis. Parameters for each indicator, including the use of averages, population thresholds, and other refinement calculations are discussed in detail below.

Findings

A review of literature focusing on child maltreatment identified key indicators associated with maltreatment and prevention need. Eight indicators with data available for all L.A. County ZIP Codes were analyzed to identify maltreatment and prevention need ZIP Codes. Combining and ranking this data allows us to list the top 25 L.A. County ZIP Codes with the highest maltreatment and prevention needs. Additional tables, grouping top 25 ZIP Codes by their maltreatment and prevention need ranks, help us to consider different types of prevention strategies for ZIP Codes with different maltreatment and prevention needs. The results of this analysis are visible in Table 2.

The 25 ZIP Codes with the highest maltreatment and prevention need rankings are listed (in order of their average rank), topped by ZIP Code 90003 in South L.A., which is annually among the ZIP Codes with the most child maltreatment referrals, most child maltreatment crimes, and highest rates of child maltreatment. With very high maltreatment and prevention need rankings, it is shaded in red in Figure 2.

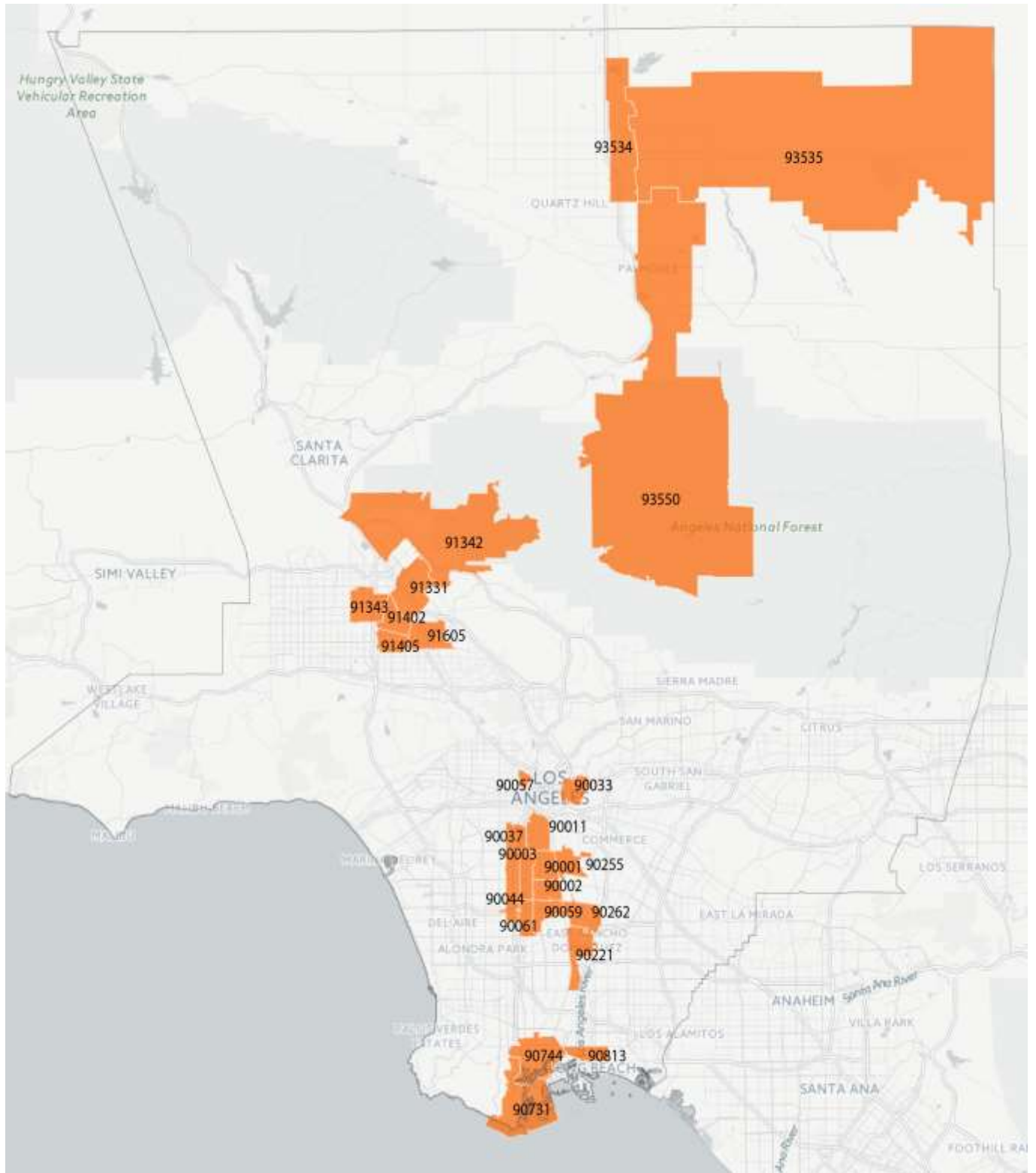
Table 2. Top 25 L.A. County Prevention Need and Maltreatment ZIP Codes

ZIP Code	Neighborhood	Prevention Need Rank	Maltreatment Rank	Average Rank
90003	South L.A.	2	1	1.5
90044	Athens	5	2	3.5
90002	Watts	6	4	5
91402	Panorama City	4	7	5.5
93550	Palmdale/Lake Los Angeles	1	12	6.5
90059	Watts/Willowbrook	7	10	8.5
90011	South L.A.	18	5	11.5
90037	South L.A.	21	3	12
91405	Van Nuys	8	22	15
90057	Westlake	9	23	16
90001	Florence/South L.A.	20	15	17.5
91331	Arleta/Pacoima	25	11	18
90061	South L.A.	19	18	18.5
90033	Boyle Heights	40	6	23
90221	East Rancho Dominguez	26	21	23.5
91342	Lake View Terrace/Sylmar	29	20	24.5
90731	San Pedro/Terminal Island	37	13	25

ZIP Code	Neighborhood	Prevention Need Rank	Maltreatment Rank	Average Rank
91605	North Hollywood	27	24	25.5
93535	Hi Vista	43	9	26
91343	North Hills	45	8	26.5
90255	Huntington Park/Walnut Park	16	41	28.5
90744	Wilmington	46	16	31
93534	Lancaster	49	17	33
90813	Long Beach	3	63	33
90262	Lynwood	33	34	33.5

Figure 1 is a mapping of the neighborhoods ranked in Table 1. Displayed here is the clustering of identified ZIP Codes into four larger areas in the Antelope Valley, South L.A., the Harbor Area, and the San Fernando Valley. There are also stand along identified ZIP Codes in Metro Los Angeles and the Boyle Heights area of the city.

Figure 1. Top 25 L.A. County Maltreatment and Prevention Need ZIP Codes



Map sources: Advancement Project, OpenStreetMap and CartoDB

The four tables below provide an additional breakdown of ZIP Codes categorized based on whether their highest rankings are driven by a top-10 maltreatment ranking, a top-10 prevention need ranking, or both. by rank of particular types of need.

Very High Maltreatment & Prevention Need

ZIP Codes

ZIP Code	Neighborhood
90003	South L.A.
90044	Athens
90002	Watts
91402	Panorama City
90059	Watts/Willowbrook

Very High Maltreatment

ZIP Codes

ZIP Code	Neighborhood
90011	South L.A.
90037	South L.A.
90033	Boyle Heights
93535	Hi Vista
91343	North Hills

Very High Prevention Need

ZIP Codes

ZIP Code	Neighborhood
93550	Palmdale/Lake Los Angeles
91405	Van Nuys
90057	Westlake
90813	Long Beach

High Maltreatment and/or Prevention Need

ZIP Codes

ZIP Code	Neighborhood
90001	Florence/South L.A.
91331	Arleta/Pacoima
90061	South L.A.
90221	East Rancho Dominguez
91342	Lake View Terrace/Sylmar
90731	San Pedro/Terminal Island
91605	North Hollywood
90255	Huntington Park/Walnut Park
90744	Wilmington
93534	Lancaster
90262	Lynwood

Figure 2 is a mapping of the neighborhoods ranked above across various categories of need. Displayed here is the natural clustering of the same four groups that encompass the top 25 Prevention Need and Maltreatment ZIP Codes coded by type of need.

Legend:

- Very High Maltreatment & Prevention Need
- Very High Maltreatment
- Very High Prevention Need
- High Maltreatment and/or Prevention Need

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Advancement Project, 2016

Concluding Remarks and Recommendations

Given this analysis of community level data indicators and the identification of these differential types of prevention hotspots, the following recommendations are offered for the further development of the OCP's prevention of child maltreatment in L.A. County:

1. Design differential interventions for targeted ZIP Codes.

With these findings, OCP can target some of the highest needs areas for prevention strategies, which were determined to be high need based on an analysis of relevant indicators that fall into three general categories:

- i. Need based on high substantiation rates
- ii. Need based on low levels of protective factors
- iii. Need based on both high maltreatment rates and low levels of protective factors.

Based on differing needs across the ZIP Codes, prevention efforts should be tailored to the varying levels of need for additional prevention resources and support while also building more interconnected (and cross-domain) solutions across county departments and community services with heightened urgency and accountability across the board. Therefore, we do encourage a further review of the capacity of existing community assets in the identified ZIP Codes that could be leveraged for this effort and to determine the order and magnitude of new prevention resources are still needed.

2. Maintain high sensitivity to cultural competence and issues of disproportionality.

The diversity of families and communities suggests that there is no “one-size-fits-all” approach. As documented in the literature review, there is a larger narrative that highlights the experiences of racial/ethnic groups, the impact on how child maltreatment is discussed, and how interventions are formed. The extent to which racial and ethnic disproportionality interact with confounding social and environmental systems is important to consider as we identify prevention strategies across highly impacted communities and ZIP Codes. We should be careful to not focus on the characteristics of individuals and families, but rather on the deprivation of resources allocated.

3. Look to community engagement strategies to identify additional resources and assets, and to build and engage a network of local county leadership.

Appropriate prevention strategies should include the expertise of the families and communities most affected by the indicators identified. Communities play a critical role not only in mobilizing efforts to prevent child maltreatment, but also by setting context around values, traditions, practices, and perceptions missing from the indicators' data measures. This approach provides opportunities to better coordinate and account for quality access and services, and further strengthen community leaders' efforts to make those services and institutions accountable to community needs.

All efforts will serve as a basis for tested solutions that can be expanded, intensified, or discontinued as coordinated solutions to prevent, and thus lessen, child maltreatment throughout L.A. County.